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A GLIMPSE OF THE ARTS CLUB OF WASHINGTON

BY RUTH K. RICE

(See opposite page)

STATELY homes line both sides of I Street, once one of the fashionable neighborhoods of Washington. Now many of them have been allowed to become shabby. So it is with surprise a passer-by discovers one that is all freshly painted and made over again. The deep red of the brick wall is broken by the blue-green slats of the blinds, a shade that usually is found on the old houses of Cape Cod only. But, following an old colonial custom, the shutters of the windows on the first floor are solid white wood. Former occupants of the house had put blinds with slats here also, and used the original shutters to make a coal-bin in the cellar. With great enthusiasm the new owners discovered them under a coating of soot, and restored them to the front of the house. In a frame of ivory-white woodwork is a blue-green door, on which shines a brass knocker with an inscription that informs those who approach near enough that this is the home of the Arts Club of Washington.

A little over a year ago a committee of the then newly organized club went house-hunting. It took imagination and foresight to see, in this neglected, dirty old building, material out of which anything habitable might be developed. But the artists saw beneath the *débris* and informed the others that it was really just what they were looking for! So a three-years lease was secured and the work began.

The membership included professional artists in all lines as well as lay members and grew rapidly. Soon it became necessary to limit the number of resident members to three hundred men and three hundred women. After the full quota is enrolled, the number may be increased, keeping always the same ratio. A committee on membership considers all names proposed, and admits no one as artist member whose work does not prove him or her worthy of the title. Along the constantly growing list of those admitted are the names of many of the best known architects, painters, sculptors, musicians, craft-workers and literary folk in the country. They are fortunate in having as president no less a person than Mr. Henry K. Bush-Brown the sculptor, examples of whose work, especially his equestrian statues, may be seen in many of our cities and parks. Much of the success of the club is due to his able leadership and enthusiasm. He has insisted that the standard be high ideals rather than elaborate *menus*.

From the beginning the motive for organizing the club has been this: to provide a place where artists might gain inspiration from association with others, and by exhibiting of their best for the benefit of others, incidentally win merited recognition. This purpose has not been lost sight of. Simplicity is the key-note of all the affairs. With

so much talent to draw from, the frequent entertainments held in the remodelled old mansion are well worth attending, and the house is admirably suited to the purpose.

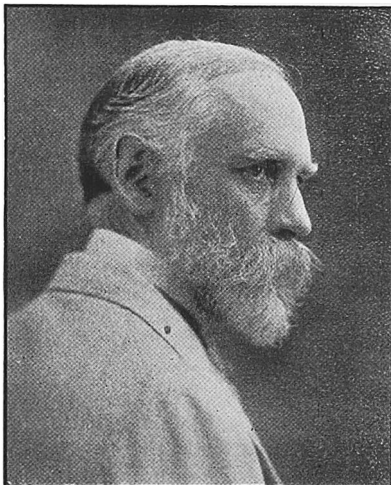
On the first floor, at the right of the entrance hall, are two high-ceiled rooms. The first serves as a reception room and office as well as for small exhibitions. The grayish-brown grass-cloth on the walls makes an excellent background for the pictures. A big fireplace filled with logs invites one, one a cold day, to pause and go no further. The furniture here as elsewhere in the house is appropriately colonial. Much of it has been lent by the members. The proceeds of an auction sale of pictures and statuary donated by the charter members and their friends all over the country were used to supplement the loan collection.

Separated by a wide archway is the dining-room, attractively furnished in mahogany. The chairs have the interesting fan-shaped backs of the old Windsor model. The wide boards of the floor are proof of the age of the house.

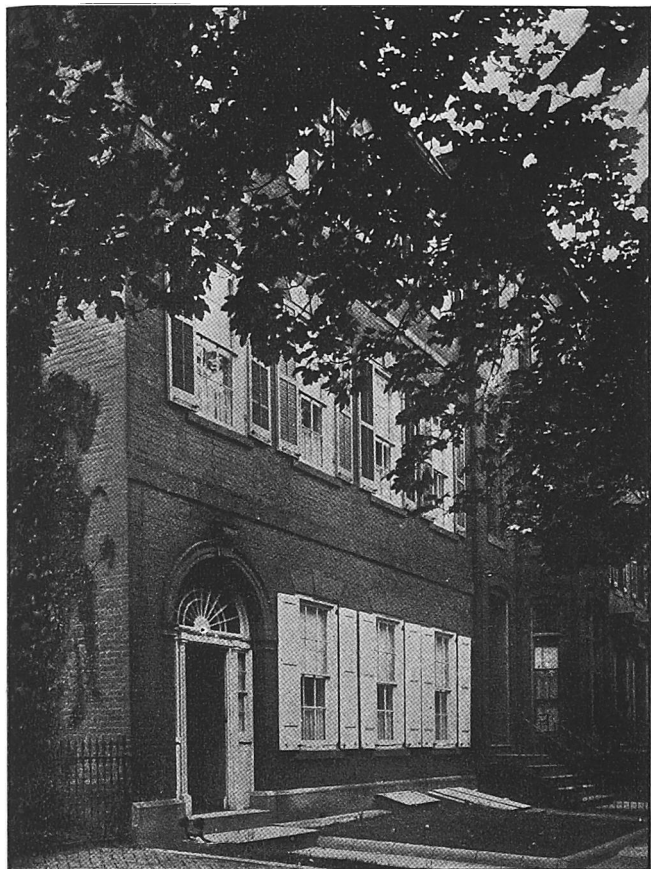
Beyond is the cozy little grill, almost filled by one long, substantial dark wood table and two

benches beside which were made by one of the members. Over it hangs a pipe-rack with the long white pipes that are smoked on certain occasions. On either side of the window hangs a breadth of effective gay cretonne, having a black background. Looking between, one sees the garden and wonders if it can possibly be only a year old for lo, it blossoms luxuriously all through the summer with carefully selected and arranged plants. An added touch of color is lent by the chairs and little square wooden tables, painted violet and white. Here are held many delightful informal affairs. A big electric light, familiarly known as the moon, is placed high on the side of the house and furnishes sufficient light after sundown, even for dinners such as took place weekly during the summer. A topic of conversation such as "What will be the effect of War on Art?" or "What is Futurism?" is chosen for each time, and after a few prepared speeches, the diners continue the discussion informally. On an evening devoted to art in connection with any particular country the decorations and menus were appropriately arranged.

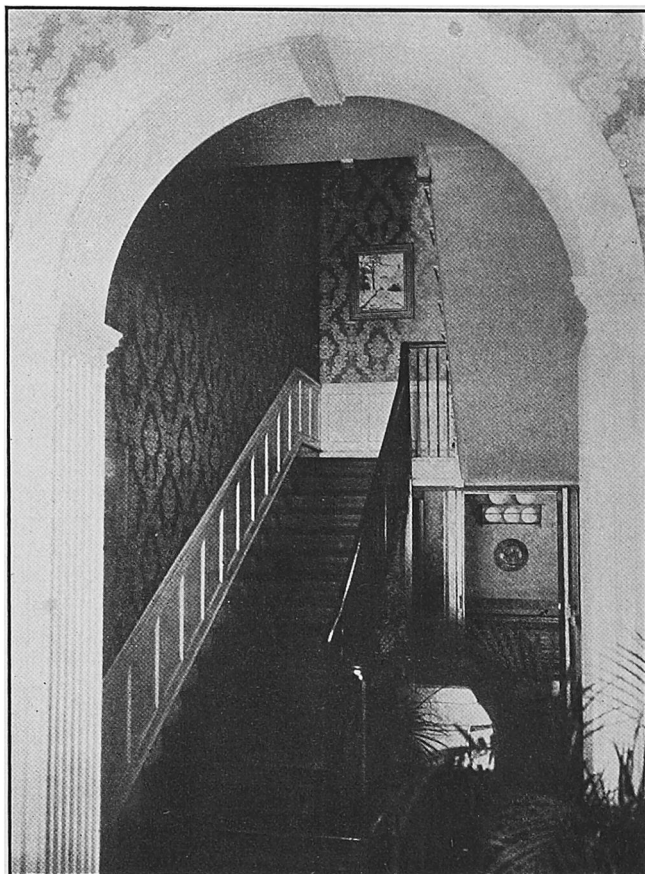
It sometimes seems as if this were a club for entertainment only, so many delightful affairs were on the calendar of its first winter. Every Sunday evening the musical committee arranged a program that was well worth hearing. Sometimes a distinguished visitor to the city was invited to sing or play. More often one or more of the members will delight an audience that taxes the capacity of the rooms. On Thursday evenings dinner is served and



H. K. BUSH-BROWN
President of the Club



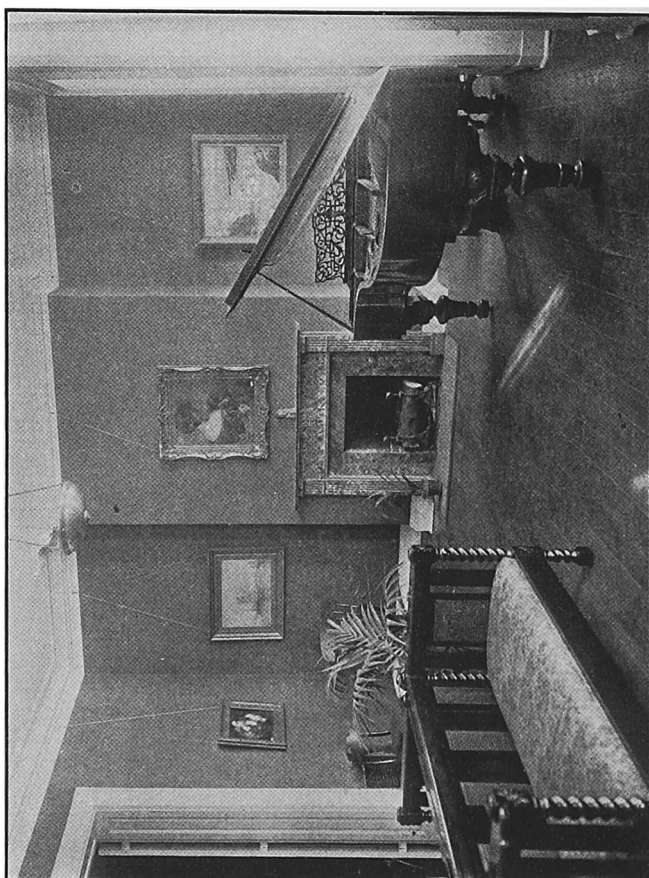
ENTRANCE TO CLUB



OLD COLONIAL STAIRCASE



DINING-ROOM



EXHIBITION-ROOM

A GLIMPSE OF THE ARTS CLUB OF WASHINGTON

(See opposite page)

after that there is sure to be something well worth staying for, or coming to, if one has not been among the diners. Occasionally a group of authors read selections from their own writings. Again a playlet or an interpretive dance has been arranged. On election night an elaborate *cabaret* may cause the guests to lose interest in the election.

These affairs as well as receptions in honor of visiting celebrities and the dances also are held in the double parlors on the second floor. One contains the grand piano used only by musical artists. In the other is a smaller instrument for informal occasions. Here also one finds a table full of magazines and comfortable easy chairs where one may pass many enjoyable hours. There is nearly always an exhibition on the walls. The furnishings are appropriately simple and well chosen.

Like many an old Southern house it has some rooms on a little half story at the back, opening off the landing of the stairs between the first and second floors, and others between the second and third floors. Each suite has been converted into a bedroom, sitting-room and bath; the one for men and the other for women. They are used as dressing-rooms or for guests of the club who desire to remain overnight. The walls are covered with dainty paper suggestive of the last century. The wooden furniture is painted gray and decorated with motifs copied from the flowered cretonne used for hangings and cushions. They too, overlook the delightful gardens.

Most of the rooms in the two upper stories are rented for studios, but one has been made into a very popular billiard-room. Entering, one feels as if he had stepped through the cover of *Vanity Fair*. For the vivid green of the billiard-table is repeated in the woodwork and the ceiling and walls are the brightest of Antwerp blue. A few well-chosen posters complete the effect, one that is pleasing to those who have kept abreast of the modern trend of fashion for the gay and startling and the explosive.

Imagine how it would be criticised by some of the earlier occupants of the mansion! The first was Timothy Caldwell who built the original house on the site in 1802. Part of this forms the back wing of the present building. It was used as Executive Mansion by President Monroe for a few months after the British had partially destroyed the White House, as British Embassy from 1820 to 1825, and as a residence by James Monroe when Secretary of State, Gideon Granger when Postmaster General, then by the son of John Quincy Adams, by Professor Abbe and other well-known men. To this list may not future generations add the names of many of the members of the Arts Club of Washington who have given within its walls proof of such talent and genius as will make them eligible for enrollment in the immortal book of fame?

Ruth K. Rice

THE RED VINEYARDS

They are threading the Red Vineyards in the sunny land of France

They are crushing out the ruddy lees—alas, but not the grape

To the booming sound of cannon in a terrible death-dance

Where each figure looms in silhouette—a grim, fantastic shape.

The dancers' feet are stained with blood, their faces ashen gray,

While they move among the trenches with their soft and ceaseless tread,

And they hear the pipes of agony shrill to them night and day

While their comrades bow beside them in the posture of the dead.

They are treading the Red Vineyards and the purple husks of pain,

They are toiling in the bitter press and know nor fear nor ruth,

In their hearts a flame-white courage makes their fighting not in vain,

But Oh the cold insensate ground that drinks the wine of youth!

That wine that warms a mother's heart, that glads a mother's glance

Oh, let not every drop be spilt before the treading cease!

May the Master of the Vineyards heal the wounded heart of France

When He comes back to the toilers with the shining words of Peace.

But better the Red Vineyards and the battle smoke and flame

Than sheltered in a dream-built world to live a life of shame.

Theodore Lynch Fitz-Simons